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Falkow Adds Badge to Master's Degree

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Like most kids of his time, Michael Falkow grew up watching classic cop and firefighter television shows like Adam-12 and Emergency.

Education and career path steered in a different direction, but the Inglewood, California, Assistant City Manager and Center for Homeland Defense and Security's master's degree graduate fused his childhood dream with his adult profession. He completed the Los Angeles Police Department Reserve Academy in June and was sworn in as a Level III Reserve Officer with the Inglewood Police Department.

"The primary motivation for wanting to become an Inglewood Reserve Police Officer was to leverage my CHDS education and training in homeland security coupled with my emergency preparedness and disaster planning experience by becoming a law enforcement officer/first responder," Falkow noted in a recent interview. "In addition, I feel as though my in-depth computer science education and experience could be valuable in helping solve cyber-related and technology-centric crimes."

He plans on applying the certification by resurrecting the city's police reserve program as well as in his varied roles overseeing emergency and disaster management policies.

Inglewood's police reserve program has been dormant, but with municipal budget constraints, a new crop of volunteers could help supplement police department staffing.

"When I first met with the Chief of Police to discuss becoming a Reserve Police Officer, we discussed all the internal and external benefits bringing the program back to Inglewood after almost 15 years would generate," Falkow said. "The Chief was highly receptive and eager to address many issues that the lack of staffing and lack of expertise within the department have caused especially in the areas of homeland security."

Typically, Level III officers do not perform duties that would result in arresting a suspect. They are generally assigned to behind the scenes desk duty or working with the custody division on inmate-related issues. This level of reserves may also be assigned to apply their professional skills and specialties to department tasks, such as financial and budget analysis or information technology work.

Resurrecting the program comes as the city is facing prosperity, and related homeland security opportunities that come with it. The Forum, former home of the Los Angeles Lakers during its "Showtime" years of the '80s, has undergone a \$100 million refurbishment by owners MSG and the 18,000-seat arena will once again become a large public meeting space. Rumors have been swirling in sports circles that a long-sought NFL franchise for the Los Angeles region may locate a team in Inglewood, bringing with it the prospects of a very large stadium. With the related mass of people attending such events comes more security concerns for the city, and Falkow said he hopes his background and certification would make him a greater asset.

"I'm confident my homeland security education and experience would be leveraged (by the police department) if and when that comes to pass," Falkow said.

As Assistant City Manager, he already oversees the non-public safety aspects of disaster and emergency planning while handling an array of tasks that includes serving as the town's Deputy Director of Emergency Services.

He also serves as commission advisor to the Inglewood Citizens Police Oversight Commission and is the lead negotiator for the city in labor agreements with all six of the city's labor organizations, which includes the city's two police unions. The Level III certification gives him another level of street credibility with full-time officers there.

"Being a sworn law enforcement officer will certainly give me more value to the City's Police Commission, as I can provide more in-depth and even first-hand perspectives into the areas they oversee," Falkow said.

Attaining his goal was a time-demanding mission on par with pursuing a CHDS master's degree. The program requires 144 hours of instruction over 10 weeks where he learned such matters as arrest tactics, firearms, batons, first aid and CPR, and the use of lethal force. The training meant going to the academy all day on Sundays as well as leaving work early two nights a week for training from 6-10 p.m. while still carrying the load of his full time job.

"I answered a lot of emails at one in the morning," he recalled. "The biggest challenge wasn't the pushups, the running, or getting up at 3 a.m. on a Sunday. Even though the City Council and City Manager were very supportive, I still had all these regular duties. The hardest part was the constant juggling of my schedule."



CHDS master's degree graduate Michael Falkow, left, was sworn in as a Level III Reserve Officer with the Inglewood Police Department by Police Chief Mark Fronterotta.



